

Chapter 15 Community Engagement & Collaboration

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan sets out an agenda for City improvement and progress toward realizing its vision for the future. Many citizens tend to think that the City government alone is responsible for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. However, implementation success will depend greatly on the City government partnering with other governments, institutions, non-profits, civic groups, businesses and residents. Many issues can only be resolved comprehensively and successfully on a regional basis, so collaboration with Rockingham County is essential. Key internal institutions with which the City hopes to collaborate are James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University and Rockingham Memorial Hospital. As the following Goal 14 shows, there are many areas where these institutions can collaborate with the City besides just the areas of education and health.

The vision statement presents a future City that is a great place to live, to raise a family, to work and to prosper. But note that the vision statement also contains another key idea – a City where citizens are inspired to work together. Goal 15 supports efforts to engender civic pride and to encourage all citizens to participate in planning for the City and working toward the vision.

Community Engagement & Collaboration Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal 14. To coordinate and collaborate with Rockingham County, Rockingham Memorial Hospital, James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University and others to meet these goals.

Objective 14.1 To explore ways that the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County might increase collaboration in the provision of public facilities and services and in other public endeavors.

Strategy 14.1.1 To establish a formal process under which the City and County can discuss and implement coordinated or shared programs in such areas as affordable housing, land use planning, growth and development, transportation, emergency communications system, parks & recreation, greenways, tourism promotion, stormwater management, environmental protection.

Objective 14.2 To coordinate and collaborate with James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Blue Ridge Community College in areas of mutual concern.

Strategy 14.2.1 As described in other objectives and strategies, to establish mechanisms and procedures for coordinating and collaborating with these institutions of higher learning on such issues as campus master planning, provision of student housing, transportation and parking, workforce development, technology business development, lifelong learning opportunities, and arts and culture.

Objective 14.3 To coordinate and collaborate with Rockingham Memorial Hospital, the Central Shenandoah Health District and the Healthy Community Council in responding to community health needs and concerns.

Strategy 14.3.1 To support and coordinate with the health community on such issues as wellness programs, health issue awareness, and doctor recruitment.

Goal 15. To engage all citizens to work collaboratively in planning, developing, and promoting the City as a great place.

Objective 15.1 To encourage citizen involvement in City affairs through a multi-venue campaign to promote civic pride and participation.

Strategy 15.1.1 To continue developing and implementing civic pride events, such as, city clean-up days, spring flower planting, volunteer recruitment fair, walk or bike to work/school day.

Objective 15.2 To establish procedures for including citizens in planning and plan implementation.

Strategy 15.2.1 To develop and implement a planning approach and process that assures involvement of residents and landowners in preparing the plans for their neighborhoods.

Strategy 15.2.2 To include citizens and the business community in commercial area revitalization planning efforts.

Strategy 15.2.3 To establish a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee for each regular comprehensive plan review and update effort.

Objective 15.3 To reach out to all segments of the population to ensure their participation in planning, developing, and promoting the City as a great place.

Strategy 15.3.1 To establish volunteer liaisons between the City and the immigrant communities.

Strategy 15.3.2 To provide signs and brochures in Spanish as much as feasible.

Strategy 15.3.3 To hire multi-lingual staff to the extent feasible.

Strategy 15.3.4 To increase the diversity of the City staff.

Strategy 15.3.5 To provide diversity training for City employees so that they are better equipped to serve all segments of the community.

Strategy 15.3.6 To provide Spanish translators at comprehensive plan public input meetings and to advertise such meetings in the local Spanish language newspaper.

Strategy 15.3.7 To continue to celebrate the City's ethnic communities through events and festivals.

Strategy 15.3.8 To encourage immigrants to learn English.